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INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 001440

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/IPA FOR
WILLIAMS/SHAMPAINE/BELGRADE; DRL FOR JAMES VIRAY; NSC FOR
ABRAMS/WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/01/16

TAGS: ELAB ECON KPAL KWBG CASC ASEC

SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN TRADE UNION LEADER KIDNAPPED,
THREATENED, AND RELEASED

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) Chairman Shaher Sa'ad was kidnapped in the West Bank town of Nablus on the afternoon of July 10. He was released unharmed following one hour of physical threats and demands by the kidnappers for him to (a) resign his post and (b) end his criticisms of groups that carry arms and practice violence. End summary.

¶2. (C) PGFTU Chairman Shaher Sa'ad told EconSpecialist July 11 that, during a June 10 lunch with visiting members of an Italian trade union in a Nablus restaurant, he was kidnapped at gun-point by five or six gunmen. Sa'ad said his kidnappers took him to a remote area where they demanded that Sa'ad resign as chairman of the PGFTU and also stop publicly criticizing those groups that carry weapons and practice violence.

¶3. (C) Sa'ad said he refused his kidnappers' insistence that he record on videotape his resignation. He noted that his kidnappers claimed to be a part of the "Chicago brigades." He was released one hour following his abduction. Sa'ad said that he met with Nablus Security officials July 11 in an effort to improve his physical protection.

¶4. (C) Comment: A disturbing element of this kidnapping is that it occurred in the presence of international visitors, which may signal greater boldness on the part of armed groups in the West Bank. An Amcit representative of the Solidarity Center, a National Endowment for Democracy fund beneficiary, works closely with Sa'ad but was not with him in Nablus July 10. RSO has contacted Amcit to discuss his personal security. End comment.

WALLES